The Paris That Was Yesterday

A GREAT city, especially one that possesses a history that reaches back through the centuries, has many angles and aspects. To understand it, it is not enough for the stranger to see it with the superficial eye; he must know something of the moods of its stones. Of all great cities, that is especially true of Paris. The casual American visitor to the city on the banks of the Seine too often touches merely the gaudy, meretricious Paris that was the Second Empire creation of Baron Haussmann and which is only partially French. Seldom does he, with eyes and mind open, see anything of the Paris that was yesterday—not merely the Paris that the Valois knew, though much of that still exists, but the Paris to which Balzac and Dumas and Victor Hugo, writing in the middle of the last century, turned for their inspiration and the study of their types.

Gateway to the Old Temple.

To the art of the Louvre, for example, American painting owes more than it can ever repay, and the serious minded American art student is always conspicuous among those copying from day to day in its galleries. But that casual American to whom reference has already been made is inclined to think of it as did the Cousin Egbert of Mr. Harry Leon Wilson's "Ruggles of Red Gap," who, under the domination of a feminine relative who was determined that he should acquire something of the effete culture of Europe, absorbed Louvre art through the pages of a convenient guide book while seated at the table of a nearby cafe, with glasses of pleasant spirituous liquors before him.

But the Louvre is more than one of the world's great art galleries. It is a monument through which we may trace many centuries of the romantic history of France. Nor was it always the gloomy though beautiful structure that we know to-day. Less than one hundred years ago, on the site of the present Place du Carroussel, at the western end of the Louvre, there was a strange labyrinth of twisting, narrow streets. One of these streets, the most sinister of them all in outward aspect, won an enduring fame in literature and fiction. That was the Rue Doyenne. It was there that Henty Murger found the *cenacle* that he was to immortalize in his "Scenes de la Vie de Boheme." It was also there that Balzac placed the home of Valerie Marneffe of "La Cousin Bette." Baron Hulot, furtively following the young woman, saw her enter the apartment which she occupied with her abominable husband.

The accompanying picture of the Louvre of the Paris that was yesterday shows the old palace as it was seen from the river. The Louvre has existed on the selfsame site since the earliest days. It began as a rough hunting lodge, erected in the time of the "do nothing" kings—a primitive, hutlike construction in the dark, wolf hunted forest to the north of the settlement on the islets of the Seine, called Lutekia, the city of mud, on account of its marshy situation. The Romans came to change that name to Lutetia, which still holds in romantic parlance. The word Louvre has been traced by some to the Latin word for wolf, and by others for an old word that meant a habitation.

The American in Paris frequently falls into the not unnatural error of believing that the site of the old Bastille is marked by the present Column of July in the center of the Place de la Bastille. As a matter of fact the famous prison, the destruction of which remains historically the symbol of the Revolution, was on that corner of the place which is close to the river bank. A curious monument which existed in the Place de la Bastille in the early part of the nineteenth century was a huge wooden elephant. Victor Hugo, in "Les Miserables," described his street urchin Gavroche, who was killed in the fighting at the barricades, as living in the elephant. The Bastille stood from the fourteenth century until 1789. The Revolutionists attacked it with the idea that it stood for harshness, injustice and oppression.

The Temple, of which the old gate is shown in the accompanying illustration, was the home of the Knight Templars, who settled in Paris in 1148. Their domain, with its dungeon, built in 1212; its manor and fortified tower, and the vast surrounding grounds, were seized in 1307 and given over to the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, known later as the Knights of Malta. From that time to the Revolution the Temple was closely linked with the life of the city. The primitive buildings were demolished, streets built along the site of some of them in the seventeenth century, and an immense battlemented castle with towers and a strong prison erected where the original stronghold had stood.

The Ruelle de Sourdis, shown in the accompanying illustration, is a typical street of the old Temple and Marais quarters. Overhead gabled windows almost meet, and down the middle of it runs the kind of gutter to which the Paris that was yesterday, romantic but indescribably dirty, looked for its limited drainage. Names great in history are associated with these amazing streets of the Temple and the Marais. At No. 5 of the Ruelle de Sourdis is found what remains of the hotel Sourdis, which in 1650 belonged to Cardinal Retz.

Far from the Temple and Marais quarters, on the *rive gauche* and near the southern fortifications, is the Gobelin factory. There, on the banks of the Bievre, the brothers Gobelin, Jehan and Philibert (are not old France and the Paris that was yesterday in those two Christian names?), famous dyers of the day, established their factory in the year 1443. There were, of course, many changes in the course of the years, but usually the artistic work of the factory was given into the hands of men of noted ability. It was regarded as an institution of special interest and visitors of mark, royal and ecclesiastical, were taken to see it.

The Old Louvre From the River.

The Castle of the White Queen.

At 17 Rue des Gobelins, in its earlier days Rue da la Bievre, is the old Castel de la Reine Blanche, dating from the sixteenth century. But the "White Queen," for whom it was first built, was probably not the mother of St. Louis, but the widow of Philippe de Valois, who died in 1398. In the sixteenth century relatives of the brothers Gobelin lived there. Then it was the head of the great factory. Revolutionists met there in 1790 to organize the attack of June 20. In Napoleon's time it was a brewery; now it is a tannery.

The part of Paris that lies in the neighborhood of the Gobelin factory is a region unfamiliar to the American visitor. Yet it was there that began one of the most famous odysseys in all the history of fiction, the flight, in Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables," of Jean Valjean and Cosette from the relentless Javert. The ex-convict and his adopted daughter had been living in a house of the Gobelin quarter in comfortable security until Javert found them out. One night Valjean stooped to give alms to a beggar near the Church of St. Medard, and recognized his foe.

The flight began. Often doubling on his trail in the hope of throwing off pursuit, Valjean made his way steadily to the northeast. The journey can be followed with comparative ease even at the present day, if one is willing to consider the changed names of certain of the streets. The fugitives, leaving the Gobelin neighborhood, passed through the labyrinth of twisting, sloping streets that clustered about St. Medard. The old Passage des Panoramas of the story is gone, but most of the streets are but little altered. Thence the way led to the river skirting the Jardin des Plantes.

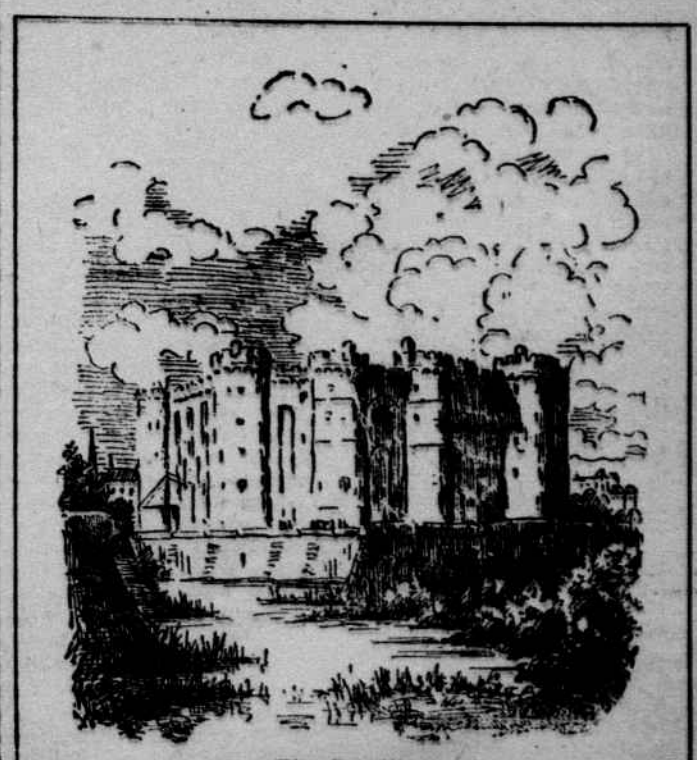
It was when crossing the Pont d'Austerlitz that Valjean, looking back, saw clearly the figure of Javert, accompanied by fellow agents of police, outlined against the moonlight. For the moment he thought himself lost, but struggled on, carrying the frightened but confiding child.

With the river left behind, the way led through a part of Paris that has completely lost its identity since the period with which "Les Miserables" dealt. The very street names have vanished as irrevocably as the convent of the Little Picpus, the wall of which Valjean, through virtue of his great strength, scaled, carrying Cosette on his back, and was lost to the amazement of the fast closing in pursuers.

Close students of Paris will find certain discrepancies and inaccuracies of topography in the description of the flight. It must not be forgotten that Hugo, in exile in the Island of Guernsey, was writing of Paris from memory.

In view of the Moliere Tercentenary mention of the Paris of the great dramatist of the age of Louis XIV. is in order. He was born in the Rue St. Honore. He was buried in the graveyard attached to the Church of St. Eustache, but in 1818 his ashes were removed to the Cemetery of Pere Lachaise. In convivial moments he was wont to foregather with other men of letters in the Taverne de la Pomme de Pin, which was in the old Rue des Feves, near Notre Dame, a street which existed until the middle of the last century and which was the scene of the opening chapters of Eugene Sue's famous "The Mysteries of Paris." In the Rue Ave-Maria, its site covered in past days by two old convents, we see at No. 15 an *hotel* where was once the tennis court of the Croix Noire, in its day the "Illustre Theatre," with Moliere as its chief and whence he was led for debt to durance vile at the Chatelet. In the Rue des Jardins Moliere lived in 1645. Toward the western boundary of the present city, and far beyond the barriers of the city of the seventeenth century, is Auteuil. No. 2 Rue d'Auteuil, formerly la Grande Rue, is said to be on the site of Moliere's country dwelling, but there is no authentic record of the exact site of the house at Auteuil, near the church, where the dramatist so often went for rest and country air.

Ruelle De Sourdis—Typical Street of Old Paris.



The Bastille.

Historic Paris. By Jetta S. Wolff. Dodd, Mead & Co.